

City of Sugar Hill
Planning Staff Report
RZ 20-002

DATE: June 24, 2020
TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Planning Director
SUBJECT: Rezoning RZ 20-002
Nelson Brogdon Blvd at Sycamore Road



ISSUE The City of Sugar Hill has received an application dated April 24, 2020, from Sinh Bui requesting to change existing zoning conditions, retain the existing general business (BG) zoning and expand the Central Business District (CBD) overlay zoning district to include the subject property ±10.79 acres at the northwest corner of Sycamore Road and Georgia Highway 20.

DISCUSSION

- Condominiums (dwelling units owned or financed by the occupant) aimed at active adults age 55 and older are proposed for the residential product.
- Downtown master plan calls for mixed use up to three stories within a 15-minute walk of the E Center and up to four stories within a 10-minute walk.
- The entire project will be within a 12-minute walk of the downtown core.
- The proposed site design is not entirely consistent with the adopted plan and CBD design standards; though the intended mix of land uses (active adult condominiums, office/retail and grocery) is compatible with the downtown plans.
- Against the existing residential properties to the north, residential condominium and office buildings are lower intensity uses than a grocery store, general retail and other neighborhood services and could act as buffer against potential light, noise, vibration and odors.
- Current zoning approval requires big box retail development with a long list of conditions on the subject property. Many of these conditions either duplicate current standard development requirements or are no longer consistent with adopted plans.
- Conceptual building arrangement appears to lack a coherent pedestrian oriented streetscape design and architectural texture that is sufficiently aligned with the goals of the downtown master plan. However, the site design may be refined through the design review board process in order to provide an overall development format which reflects the adopted downtown vision plan.
- Subject property currently lies within the Town Center Overlay and requires design review approval prior to approving permits for any improvements.
- The applicant was unable to produce the necessary documents for a full design review of the first phase of development which is to include the grocery store and associated site improvements but wishes to continue pursuing zoning approval for the project at this time.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approval of the request for general business zoning, change in conditions and expansion of the central business district to include the subject property with the following nine conditions as recommended by the planning commission.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The planning commission held a scheduled public hearing on Monday, June 15, 2020. Patricia Smith spoke on behalf of this request. The planning commission made a motion to approve the change in conditions for the existing BG zoning, and the expansion into the CBD with the following conditions:

1. These conditions shall replace and supersede all prior stipulations and conditions, including all prior zoning actions, variances, and special use permits that are currently in place on the subject property.
2. Site development plan for 2.94 acre commercial tract shall not contain more than 152 parking spaces.
3. The following uses are prohibited:
 - a. Psychic reading,
 - b. fortune telling,
 - c. astrology,
 - d. phrenology,
 - e. palmistry,
 - f. clairvoyance or related commercial practices.
4. All dwelling units shall be set up as condominiums. No more than 10% of the total number of dwelling units are allowed to be leased at any one time. Notice shall be recorded with the covenants and enforced by the property owners association.
5. At least 80% of the occupied units shall be occupied by at least one person who is 55 years of age or older. Notice shall be recorded with the covenants and enforced by the property owners association.
6. Developer must provide enhanced pedestrian crossings, protected left turn signals and decorative mast arms at Highway 20 (subject to coordination with City of Sugar Hill, Gwinnett Department of Transportation and Georgia Department of Transportation) and Sycamore Road. The developer may execute a performance agreement accompanied by sufficient surety to cover the cost of construction prior to receiving certificate of occupancy for residential building(s).
7. Developer must provide an enhanced pedestrian crossing on Sycamore Road prior to receiving a building permit for residential building(s).
8. Total number of parking spaces on all tracts shall not exceed 420 spaces.
9. Developer shall provide written notification to the school board to include number of units, type of housing, number of bedrooms and phasing of the project.

Motion approved 5-0.

BACKGROUND

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| Applicant/Owner: | Sinh Bui |
| Existing Zoning: | General Business District (BG) |
| Request(s): | General Business District with Central Business District Overlay (BG/CBD) |
| Purpose: | Mixed use. Residential condominium buildings, retail and office. |
| Property Size: | ± 10.79 acres |
| Location: | Tax Parcel Id Number: 7-306-047, 048, -49, 050, 051 & 052 5000 Block of Nelson Brogdon Blvd. @ Sycamore Road |
| Public Notice: | Letters to adjoining owners via USPS regular mail on 5/27/20 Sign posted at 1113 Buford Highway 5/27/20 Ad in legal section of Gwinnett Daily Post on 5/27/20 & 6/24/20 |
| Public Comments: | Opposing: Gary Pirkle by phone. Supporting: Tricia Smith (Sycamore Rd) by phone. Linda Mullins (Riverside Rd) supportive of grocery and age restricted condos, expressed mild concern about possibility of congestion at the corner and excitement about the downtown and greenway plans. |

FINDINGS OF FACT

- North: Medium Density Single-Family Residential (RS100)
- South: General Business District (BG) & Light Manufacturing District (LM)
- East: Medium Density Single-Family Residential (RS100) & Light Industry District (HM-1)
- West: Light Industry District (HM-1) & Office Institutional District (OI)

The proposed site plan shows four commercial buildings totaling 73,000 gross floor area (GFA) for general retail and office (4.22 acres) with an additional 31,042+/- SF grocery store on the corner (2.94 acres).

Four buildings, each with five-stories and 40,000 square foot GFA, housing a total of age restricted 120 residential condominium units are proposed for the remainder of the property.

A total of 463 parking spaces are provided for the site. 177 for the general retail/office space, 152 for the grocery store and 134 for the residential buildings of which 111 are provided under the buildings on the ground level.

ZONING ANALYSIS

1. Will the rezoning requested permit a use that is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby property?

Yes. The subject property lies within a 15 minute walk of the downtown core. Condominium residences, office and retail are desirable land use elements within the

downtown area. However, the site plan and building format are not entirely consistent with the downtown master plan and CBD design standards.

- 2. Will the rezoning requested adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby properties?***

No.

- 3. Does the property for which the rezoning is requested have a reasonable economic use as current zoned?***

Yes.

- 4. Will the rezoning requested create an overcrowding condition with respect to the existing streets, transportation facilities, or schools?***

No. Recent capacity improvements to Highway 20 and intersection improvements are expected to provide sufficient levels of service. Pedestrian safety improvements along Sycamore Road and Highway 20 will be necessary to meet goals of the downtown master plan.

- 5. Does the rezoning requested conform to the Sugar Hill Land Use Plan?***

Yes. However, the site design and arrangement of the buildings do not appear to be entirely consistent with the downtown vision plan and CBD design standards.

- 6. Are there other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property which would give support to an approval or disapproval of the rezoning request?***

The City's Comprehensive Plan:

"Encourage small-scale, retail and service-oriented commercial development in commercial nodes near residential neighborhoods." (4.2.1)

PROJECT 'SYCAMORE SQUARE'**LETTER OF INTENT**

Franklin Investment Group, the owner of the 10.79-acre property at the northwest corner of Nelson Brogdon Boulevard/Hwy20 and Sycamore Rd, believe our plan for this site will contribute to the continuing economic and community development of the City of Sugar Hill and justifies the expansion of its Central Business District to include the site. To make this happen, we are requesting the approval of:

- a) Retaining the current zoning of BG following the combining of the 6 separate parcels into 1 parcel (just completed; same ownership; attachment 4.1)
- b) Expansion of the Central Business District to include our entire property (CBD Overlay District)
- c) Change in conditions requiring residential units to be:
 - a. age-restricted to 55+ (at least 80% of the occupied units shall be occupied by at least one person who is 55 years of age or older)
 - b. condominium ownership

'Sycamore Square': Our Strategy

Our strategy is to attract the wealthier active adults (age 55+ but closer to 55) to plant their roots, engage in community development and invest in the long-term growth of the city of Sugar Hill and its Central Business District.

This is a desirable segment to have as homeowner and community citizen. Typically, members of this target group are older, skilled working professionals with substantial accumulated assets. They are downsizing empty nesters and renewed singles. They tend to actively engage in social groups and community development. They'd want their next residence to be their home for the next phase of their life and to eventually be the 'place' in 'aging-in-place'. As such, they want this to be a smart lifestyle and a smart investment choice.

We want to create a sub-community especially for these homeowners at our 10.79-acre site. For their smart lifestyle choice, it's our close proximity to the city of Sugar Hill's plentiful amenities, to Lake Lanier and to easy access to major transportation arteries. It will be 'walkable living' so that they can 'live, work, shop, play' within the sub-community in shops, restaurants and offices that are geared towards serving them. Within the condominium building residences, it's premium-to-market living - single level, elevatored, spacious (at least 1,200 sq ft per unit) with quality finishes. It's active, engaging lifestyle with many amenities and customized programming. Our designs and programming will incorporate 'aging-in-place' features and evolve so that they can remain in this home for as long as possible.

From the homeowner's perspective, owning a quality home in a well-designed condo building located in a properly managed development within the CBD of a growth city like Sugar Hill seems like a smart investment choice. But this sub-community needs a sizable residential

population base to form viable social groups, to provide a larger consumer base for the retail and office tenants, and to have a more substantial identity. And in order to fit on the designated 3.63 residential acres, this sub-community needs the higher residential FAR, higher building heights, and tighter design standards entitled by the CBD Overlay District. With sufficient residential development scale, the entire project becomes more feasible and attractive from a developer/investor standpoint.

'Sycamore Square': Master Development Plan

Our current master development plan calls for an age-restricted (55+) residential district combined with a commercial district to be guided by CBD Overlay District design standards. We followed the Downtown Development Vision by adhering to the 2-4 stories mixed-use design on our site.

In this particular design, the residential units will be housed in 4 condominium buildings totaling 160,000 sq. ft in gross floor area. With 3.63 acres in dedicated land, the residential FAR is thus 1.01. Each building will have about a 10,000 sq. ft footprint and have 4-story of living space with the ground floor used for resident parking. Assuming minimum per unit floor area is 1,200 sq ft, the maximum number of residential units is 120. Total residential parking spaces in the current design is 134. Most likely at offering, the unit mix will be 2 & 3 bedrooms with the range in unit sizes from 1,200 to 2,400 sq. ft. The product we're envisioning should enable a selling price point of at least \$200 per sq. ft. The buildings may be structurally connected as needed. There will be landscaped common courtyards and shared amenities spaces throughout. The entire residential district is fenced with a direct access off Sycamore Rd. There is convenient walkable access to the commercial district.

Examples of the type of residential offering we're considering (condo building for active adults 55+) is attached (as 4.2).

We also envision a commercial district that attracts and serves the 'nearby' and 'drive-by' population with primarily specialty retailing and professional services (example: health, wellness & longevity -oriented). Our current plan for the commercial district yields about 104,000 sq. ft of gross floor area for general retail/office use with 329 surface and structured parking spaces. There are 3 interior buildings (each 2-stories, 10,000 sq. ft footprint) and one 6,500 sq. ft footprint, 2-story building fronting Nelson Brogdon Blvd. Urban streetscape will be incorporated throughout. Examples of the design character/elements for the commercial area is attached (as 4.3). The allocated land for commercial use is approximately 7.16 acres thus the commercial FAR is .33.

The 31,000+ sq. ft, single story building at the premium, southeast corner of our property is slated for use as a grocery store. This approximately 3.0-acre parcel (shown in Site Plan) is under contract to be sold to Lidl U.S. Operations, LLC who will build and operate their Lidl grocery store at the site. Lidl is a global leader in their industry segment operating more than 11,000 stores, active in 32 countries, employing over 287,000 people. We appreciate that Lidl wants to be a part of our commercial district and master development.

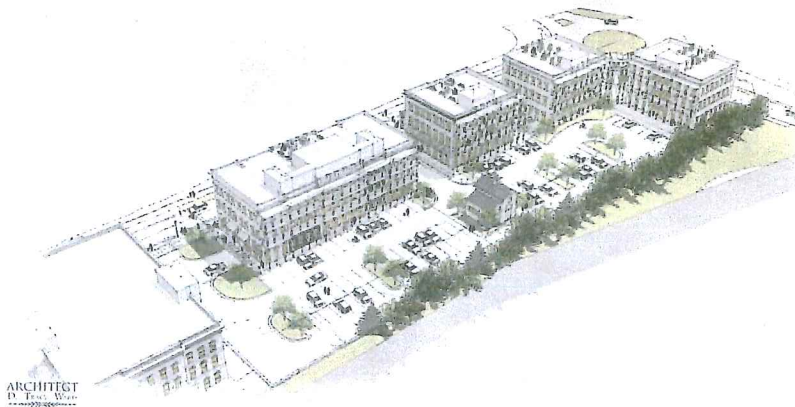
Having been a property owner in the city of Sugar Hill since 2004, Franklin Investment Group is thrilled to see the transformation that has been and is taking place. We believe in the present and future of the Sugar Hill community. We wholeheartedly support the vision for the city of Sugar Hill as presented in the Downtown Master Plan and are grateful for the opportunity to participate. Our master plan is fully intended to support the realization of that vision. With your approvals for the CBD expansion and change in conditions, we will be able to proceed with the next steps on this very exciting journey.

PROJECT 'SYCAMORE SQUARE'

EXAMPLE: CONDO BUILDING FOR ACTIVE ADULTS (55+)/
RESIDENTIAL DESIGN CHARACTER

'MARKET DISTRICT AT CRABAPPLE' (Milton, GA)
(www.marketdistrictcrabapple.com)

- Walkable extension from Milton City Hall
- 8 buildings: 3 residential, 5 mixed-use (all 3 stories)
- Active adult Residences: 1,500-2,000 sq. ft per unit 1-2 bedrooms, baths; offering \$330-\$400+ per sq ft
- Currently pre-sold and doing site work



PROJECT 'SYCAMORE SQUARE'

COMMERCIAL DISTRICT DESIGN EXAMPLE: 'Crabapple Market' ([Crabapple Market](#))

- Walkable extension from Milton City Hall and residential communities
- Mature development



1
Attachment
4.3

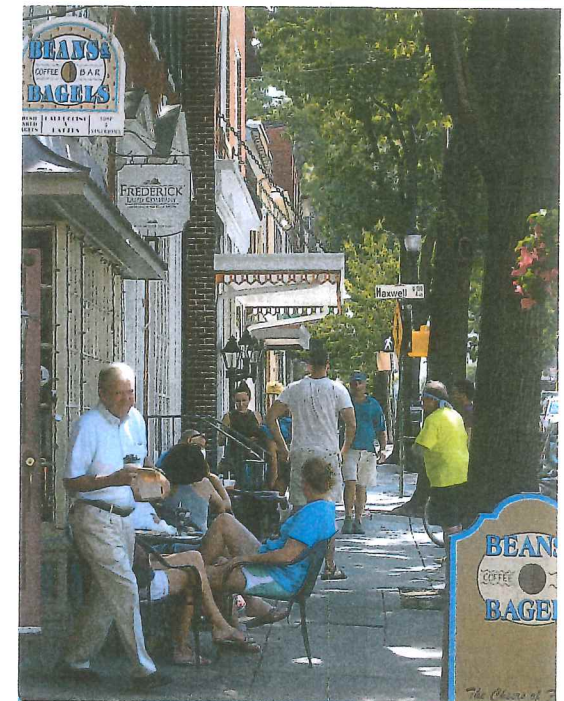
RZ-20-002 Rec. 4/30/2020

RECORDED

PROJECT 'SYCAMORE SQUARE'

Examples of 'Urban Streetscape' design elements to be incorporated:

- Small public gathering places (including outdoor dining)
- Clear walk paths
- Balconies and awnings



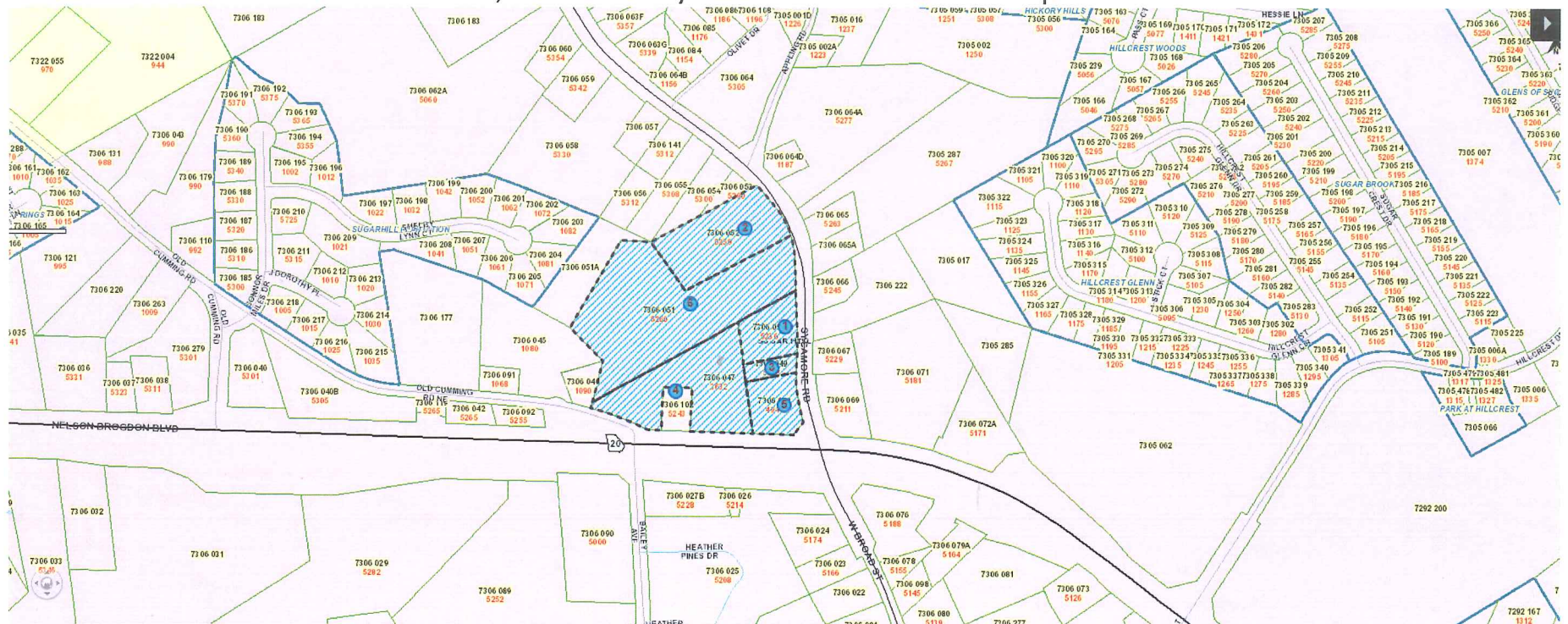
RZ 20.002 Rec. 4/24/2020

RECOMMENDED

SINH BUI

Request to rezone from BG to BG/CBD

Mixed use, multi-family and commercial development

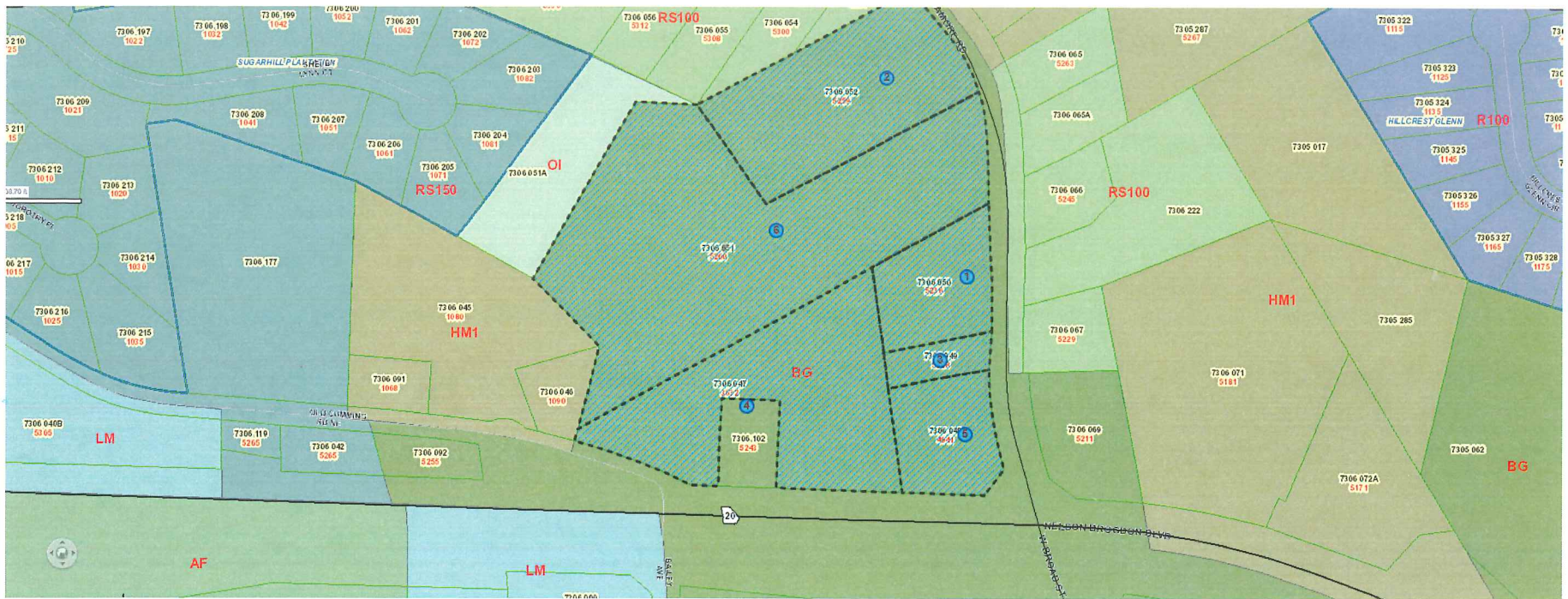


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